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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses ways to facilitate the emerging literacy of deaf children by encouraging bilingualism in American Sign Language and English within the context of what is known from research and practice about emerging literacy in hearing and deaf children. This approach focuses on enrichment by the addition of a second language (English) while supporting the primary language (ASL) as the language of instruction. Three broad topics are emphasized: (1) developing metalinguistic awareness of the two languages; (2) shared storybook experiences; and (3) writing development. Other factors, such as the importance of fingerspelling, social interaction, and the use of environmental print are addressed within the three areas of focus. (Contains 58 references.) (DB)

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Becoming Bilingual:

Facilitating English Literacy Development Using ASL in PreSchool

by
Lynne Erting
and
Judy Pfau

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Table of Contents

Sharing Ideas: Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center
Occasional Papers Series v
About the Authors vii
Becoming Bilingual: Introduction 1
Emerging Literacy 3
Metalinguistic Awareness 4
Shared Storybook Experiences 6
Strategies for Effective Storybook Sharing 7
Connecting ASL and English through Storybook Sharing 8
Taking time 9
Writing Development 10
Conclusion 13
References 15

Sharing Ideas

The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center's (formerly Pre-College National Mission Programs) "Sharing Ideas" series is comprised of working or occasional papers and videos of interest to parents and teachers of deaf and hard of hearing children, researchers, school administrators, support service personnel, and policy makers. Works in the series are often prepared for a specific 'occasion,' and include papers, presentations, or final reports that address a need in the field or contribute to the growing body of knowledge about educating deaf and hard of hearing children. The intent of the series is to act as a clearinghouse for sharing information from a number of sources.

These widely disseminated papers cover a broad range of timely topics, from describing innovative teaching strategies to reviewing the literature in an area of inquiry to summarizing the results of a research study. In every case, there is a common focus: improving the quality of education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Clerc Center welcomes feedback about the concepts presented, particularly in the case of 'working papers,' which often represent works in progress or express the views or experiences of an author.

Researchers, graduate students, parents, and teachers are encouraged to send proposals for review and possible inclusion in the Sharing Ideas series. Submissions to the series are reviewed by content experts before acceptance for publication as Clerc Center products.

About the Authors

Lynne Erting has taught deaf children for 16 years. She teaches 2 1/2- to 4-year-old deaf children at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School on the campus of Gallaudet University. She is currently participating in a collaborative research project involving both university and teacher researchers. Ms. Erting is also a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Maryland in the areas of emergent language and literacy development and bilingual education.

Judy Pfau received her M.A. from Western Maryland College and has taught deaf children for 8 years. She taught four- to five-year-olds at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School, where she was known for her narrative ability in American Sign Language, her native narrative language. Ms. Pfau was also participating in a collaborative research project in her former position as preschool teacher at Kendall Demonstration Elementary School, and is particularly interested in the language and literacy development of young deaf children. She is currently a teacher in the preschool at the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind.

Becoming Bilingual: Facilitating English Literacy Development Using ASL in PreSchool

Introduction

Most deaf children are born into a unique linguistic situation. Their hearing loss prevents them from acquiring the naturally occurring spoken language of their homes. Since they cannot hear that language to some degree, they are unable to fully participate in the interactions with family members that are so crucial to language development. Consequently, they do not develop a strong linguistic base with which to express themselves and to make sense of the world. Generally, this group of deaf children enters school linguistically, cognitively, and experientially well behind their hearing peers who have had the benefit of acquiring native language competence within their home environments (Griffith, Johnson, & Dastoli, 1985).

About 10% of all deaf children, however, have at least one deaf parent and are exposed to American Sign Language (ASL) as their first language within the family/home environment (Karchmer & Trybus, 1977; Woodward, 1990). The exposure to a language that utilizes the children's vision rather than their limited hearing provides them with the opportunity to participate in the dialogue of the home from which first language acquisition generally emerges (Bruner, 1983; John-Steiner & Tatter, 1983; Vygotsky, 1962). They appear to acquire ASL fluency in the same way and at the same rate that hearing children master their native language (Maxwell, 1984; Rudser, 1988; Schlessinger, 1978). Development of conversational skills and pragmatics of language also appears to parallel that of hearing children (Meadow, Greenberg, Erting, & Carmichael, 1981). In other words, a small minority of deaf children grow up with the opportunity to develop language (ASL) naturally within their home environment. They enter preschool programs ready to participate in an age-appropriate curriculum.

Consequently, preschool programs which serve deaf children are faced with a population that has very different, yet somewhat similar, language development needs. The majority of the deaf children need to develop competency in a language. Deaf children of deaf parents who enter preschool with age-appropriate ASL development need the curriculum delivered in the language that they understand. And they all need to develop literacy in English.

Given these parameters, the issues discussed in this paper will take a bilingual perspective in which ASL is the primary language for face-to-face communication and written English is the second language (Grosjean, 1992). In addition to providing language input that is comprehensible because it is visible, using ASL as the language of instruction affords deaf children many advantages. First, it provides the children with the linguistic foundation and background knowledge necessary to make the second language more comprehensible (Johnson, Liddell & Erting, 1989; Keatinge, 1984; Krashen, 1991). Second, it facilitates the ability to use language to solve problems and to participate in the types of interactions which promote higher order thinking (Krashen, 1991; Krashen & Biber, 1988). Third, it enhances the development of basic literacy.

However, here is where the application differs for deaf students. Since ASL does not have a written form, young deaf students cannot learn to read in their primary language. However, their knowledge and mastery of ASL serves as the conduit for learning to read and write English (Drasgow, 1993; Mahshie, 1995). The emergence of literacy, then, for deaf students becomes the process of becoming bilingual.

Since bilingualism for many deaf people involves learning a second language which they do not often use in face-to-face communication, the two languages have distinct and separate uses. ASL, which has no widely-accepted written form, is used as the primary language of face-to-face communication. English, since it is an auditory language that cannot be fully represented in sign (Baker, 1978; Marmor and Petitto, 1979), is taught and used in its written form. From this perspective, a bilingual deaf person is one who is a fluent signer and who is fully literate--reading and writing English proficiently (Hansen, 1990).

There are a number of approaches to bilingual education, of which the additive approach (Lambert, 1975) appears to be the most appropriate for deaf students. This approach focuses on enrichment by the addition of a second language while supporting the primary language as the language of instruction (Wolfe, 1990). One of the features of additive bilingual education that appears to be particularly salient for preschool deaf students is the emphasis on instruction using the child's primary language. This focus directly addresses the diversity in children's language

development that exists among preschool deaf children. The children who enter school without a well-estabished primary language will have an opportunity to attain sufficient proficiency in their primary language (ASL) before they begin to formally learn to read English (Cummins, 1981). Instruction delivered in ASL will provide deaf children of deaf parents with opportunities for the development of deeper cognitive and academic skills that predict school success as well as eliminate the possibility of a language difference between the school and home environment.

Emerging Literacy

The primary focus of this paper is to discuss the emerging literacy of deaf children within the framework of the additive bilingual perspective outlined above. The discussion is grounded in our experiences as teachers and is supported by research on language and literacy development of both deaf and hearing preschoolers. Our reflections and discussions were guided by "theoretically informed speculation" (Bissex & Bullock, 1987, p. xii). We used what we know about theory and research to help us reflect on our current classroom practice, as well as past experiences within and outside the classroom. We were not looking for definitive answers, but rather for an intersection between theory, research and classroom practice in order to contribute to our understanding of language and literacy development in young deaf children. Our discussions included actively searching for specific examples; observing one another teach and sharing and discussing what we observed; and reflecting on our classroom experiences individually and later sharing our insights. We found that this process helped clarify what we are doing as teachers as well as what the students do as learners.

Another of the purposes of this paper is to contribute to a discussion that is just beginning in the field of deaf education; to generate hypotheses about how young deaf children make meaningful connections with print in bilingual programs by reflecting on our own experiences as teachers and to invite teachers and other professionals in our field to engage in similar activities. It may be that many of the examples we provide are familiar to most teachers who work with young deaf children. What may be different, however, is the framework within which these experiences are placed. When the emergence of literacy is viewed as learning a different language, the process of making connections between ASL and English becomes more clear.

Three broad topics will guide this discussion about how teachers can facilitate the development of ASL and English literacy in preschool deaf children. These include: 1) metalinguistic awareness in terms of becoming aware of the two

languages; 2) shared storybook experiences; and 3) writing development. Other factors such as the importance of fingerspelling, social interaction, and the use of environmental print are included within the three areas of focus.

Metalinguistic Awareness

For the purposes of this discussion, metalinguistic awareness will be defined as the process of thinking about and reflecting on the nature and functions of language (Pratt & Grieve, 1984); including knowledge about the demands of different language and literacy events and beliefs about oneself and others as language users (Rowe & Harste, 1986). The metalinguistic processes--the processes by which we reflect upon or become conscious observers of language use--of both the children and the teacher need to be considered.

Since we are focusing on children five or six years of age and under, we are not suggesting providing them with detailed explanations about ASL or English grammar. We are instead taking the Vygotskian (1962) perspective, which holds that many everyday skills, including language skills, develop spontaneously without conscious awareness of what is involved and that awareness of that skill (metalinguistic awareness) can only develop once the skill has been acquired. This perspective, coupled with the unique language learning situation of most deaf children, indicates that any exposure to metalinguistic development during the preschool years be indirect and in the form of language development, language play and enrichment opportunities. For example, very young deaf children could play sign games which involve copying signs, rhythmic signing activities, copying signs that use a particular handshape, and possibly simple ASL poetry. Older preschool children enjoy more complex sign games such as thinking of signs that use a particular handshape (related to the alphabet or number signs, for example), composing stories using only one handshape, and playing with signs in a creative way, such as variations on the children's name signs. Opportunities to enhance metalinguistic awareness, particularly as it relates to the developing awareness of ASL and English as two separate languages, can also appear as those "teachable moments" that often occur during a class discussion or other lesson format.

Some of our students have shown an emerging sense of metalinguistic awareness through inquiries about the languages to which they have been exposed. In our experience, these children are usually between four and five years of age. Some examples of these inquiries include noticing and asking about punctuation in a written English sentence, commenting on or correcting someone's sign choice (which led to a discussion of the variety of signs that could be used to convey a spe-

cific concept), and a brief explanation by the teacher about word order in a written English sentence that emerged within the context of a class discussion.

Another example related to metalinguistic awareness has to do with students' attempts to connect English letters with ASL signs on an alphabet chart. Often alphabet charts include the upper and lower case letters, a picture of an English word that begins with that letter, and the appropriate handshape for the letter; i.e., 'Aa,' a picture of an apple, and the handshape A. Some charts include the written word but many do not. By not including the word on the chart, the connection between the letter, the word, and the handshape is missing and sometimes confuses the students because the handshape for the sign is often not the same as the handshape for the English word depicted on the alphabet chart. Even if the word is included on the chart, the students still may not make the appropriate connections on their own.

For example, the English word 'apple' begins with 'a' but the sign itself is made with an X handshape (no word was provided on the chart). In an attempt to make sense of this situation, some four and five year old students were observed signing APPLE with an A handshape. This prompted an explanation by the teacher that included distinguishing between the two languages. She corrected the child, explaining that the *word* begins with an A but the *sign* uses a handshape that is not related to the initial letter of the English word. Although she did not explicitly explain that there were two languages involved, she provided the exposure to this concept within a naturally occurring classroom event.

The last example of ways to facilitate metalinguistic awareness in this bilingual situation occurred within the context of a discussion about Fall. The teacher wrote the word on the blackboard, fingerspelled it and pointed out that this one word could be signed in many different ways, depending on its intended usage. The appropriate meaning of the word "fall" in this situation was the season Fall and the sign for that meaning should be used. If the word meant "a person falling down," a different sign would be used, although the word would remain the same. She also pointed out that in this case, signing was less ambiguous than the printed word.

Research in the development of metalinguistic awareness in deaf preschoolers could provide us with useful information as to when and how deaf children develop the knowledge that they are in a bilingual situation and how this knowledge contributes to growth in both languages. The role of the adult in facilitating the development of such awareness is another area that needs to be explored.

It is important for teachers of deaf children who are working in a bilingual situation to have a clear understanding of when and how to use ASL and English.

Research suggests that this is not always the case (Mather, 1987; Woodward & Allen, 1987). If teachers are confused or unaware of aspects of the languages we are using, providing clear guidance for our students will be difficult, if not impossible. Therefore, becoming more aware of our own metalinguistic processes in regard to the languages and thought processes we use while teaching may help us understand exactly why we do what we do when we teach. For example, teachers' explicit understanding of the rules of ASL and English can help them provide appropriate language models and opportunities for language learning.

Shared Storybook Experiences

There is an abundance of research that strongly suggests that daily storybook sharing (being read to by adults and older children) at home contributes greatly to early language and literacy development in young hearing children (Durkin, 1966; Heath, 1982; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Snow, 1983; Teale, 1986; Wells, 1985). The limited body of research that focuses on parental storybook sharing with deaf children shows similar results (Andrews & Taylor, 1987; Ewoldt & Saulnier, 1992; Maxwell, 1984). Regular storybook sharing with hearing children in school also appears to increase the likelihood of academic achievement (Hickman, 1979; Putnam, 1981) as well as language and literacy learning (Brown, Cromer, & Weinberg, 1986; Combs, 1987; Feitelson, Kita, & Goldstein, 1986; Morrow, 1988). Although there is no research of this kind that directly documents the benefits of storybook sharing in classrooms for deaf children, it would follow that given comprehensible input, such benefits would be enjoyed by deaf children as well. Our own experiences as teachers confirm such a conclusion.

Storybook sharing in ASL appears to be a naturally occurring early bridge between the language of delivery (ASL) and the language of the book (English print). Children who need to develop competency in ASL are provided with a language model in an enjoyable format. Children who have begun developing ASL in their home environments have the opportunity to see a story without struggling with a language difference between the teacher and themselves. Their ASL development is also enhanced by the model provided by the teacher within this context. It appears that after a solid base in ASL has been established, children either begin to notice the print and to ask questions themselves, or they are receptive to guidance from the teacher. Our later examples will offer clarification of this observation.

There are many issues involved when looking at storybook sharing with deaf children. In order to make this discussion manageable, the focus will be limited to the following areas: 1) strategies for effective storybook sharing; 2) the kinds of connec-

tions that children and teachers make between ASL and English during storybook sharing, and 3) the importance of recognizing that repeated storybook sharing takes time, but it is time well-spent. The context includes small group or one-to-one storybook sharing events in which ASL is used to share the book.

Strategies for Effective Storybook Sharing

The limited body of research that examines storybook sharing using the naturally occurring sign language of the deaf community strongly suggests that there are certain strategies parents and teachers employ that encourage engagement (attention) and active participation in the storybook sharing process. The ability to hold the child's visual attention is vital in order for the storybook sharing to occur. This is particularly important when the children are very young (three and under) and/or they are new to a signing environment. One strategy is signing within the child's focus of attention. This can take the form of using small signs near the book (Lem & Timmerman, 1990), incorporating the book as part of the sign (Ewoldt & Saulnier, 1992; Mather, 1989; Maxwell, 1984), and signing on the child's body (Ewoldt & Saulnier, 1992; Andrews & Mason, 1987; Maxwell, 1984). It has been our experience that signing on the children's bodies is especially effective in maintaining their attention and interest. Other strategies cited in the research that appear useful are role playing (Ewoldt & Saulnier, 1992; Lem & Timmerman, 1990; Mather, 1989; Maxwell, 1984), and appropriate use of non-manual signals such as facial expression (Mather, 1989). Additional factors that have not been included in research thus far but have been effective with our students include close proximity so that the teacher can easily touch each child, smaller groups for students who are new to signing (up to three children), and using books that have clear, colorful pictures which tap into the children's experiences.

Research has identified some strategies that appear to facilitate children's comprehension and participation in the story sharing event. These include: 1) creating a positive and risk-free environment (Mather, 1989) in which the children feel comfortable participating; 2) competence in ASL on the part of the adult so that the language can be as complex or as simple as necessary according to the audience (Mather, 1987; 1989); 3) providing background information and context when necessary (Mather, 1989); 4) asking questions which require active participation and thinking on the part of the children (Andrews & Taylor, 1987; Mather, 1989); 5) providing scaffolded support, guiding the children in their comprehension of the story (Andrews & Taylor, 1987; Mather, 1989, Maxwell, 1984); and 6) relating the book to the children's lives (Maxwell, 1984).

Connecting ASL and English through Storybook Sharing

Most of the deaf children we have taught love to have storybooks shared with them. By making storybook sharing an integral and enjoyable part of the school day, we are fostering a positive attitude towards reading and learning English. This attitude opens the door for more direct connections between the two languages to occur.

To our knowledge, there is no classroom research that looks at ASL story sharing in terms of literacy development. Consequently, the bulk of this section will be based on what we have observed in our own classrooms. One area that appears to be significant: emerging print awareness seems to be connected with repeated readings. Research on repeated read-alouds with hearing children suggests that children's comprehension of a story becomes more complete each time a story is reread (Yaden, 1988) and their questions about books become more sophisticated (Martinez, 1983; Martinez & Roser, 1985). We have noticed that in order for our children to begin to express some kind of connection with the print in the book, they must first become familiar with the story itself. Thus, the first time we share a story with our students, we usually focus on the main ideas and basic concepts, leaving more detailed descriptions for subsequent storytimes. During these first or second readings, the children may be completely silent throughout the story sharing event. Similar observation has been documented in hearing children. Yaden (1988) found that silence during storybook reading usually meant deep involvement with the story.

The next time the book is shared, details can be added that enhance its richness. Perhaps some students are comfortable enough at this point to begin asking questions about the print on their own. We have also observed that our children who do begin to comment on or ask questions about the print in storybooks have a well established language base as well as experience with books outside of school.

During subsequent readings, depending on the children's awareness level and age, the teacher can point out significant words in the print, ask the students to find specific words in the print, or the students themselves may initiate such activity. This is not to suggest a specific number of re-readings or exact patterns to follow when sharing books with young deaf children. The point is that repeated exposure to a story provides the opportunity for deeper comprehension of the story itself and increased awareness about words and illustrations (Yaden, 1988).

One example from our experience may clarify this point. Ms. Pfau shared a predictable big book with her class of four-year-olds. After initially sharing the story

in ASL, one of the students caught on to the repetitive concept of the book and began to sign NO in the appropriate place. Although the print did not repeat the word 'no' as part of the predictability, the word 'no' was part of the text. Ms. Pfau, following the lead of the child, found the word 'no' in the text, pointed it out to the children and she began fingerspelling the "no, no" phrase when it fit into the book conceptually. She also pointed out that N-O spells the sign for NO. Later, she asked the children to find the word 'no' in the text themselves. She also varied the way she signed the words "no, no," perhaps akin to the way hearing teachers may vary their vocal intonation, to keep the children interested. This technique connected the ASL with part of the text as well as provided the children with opportunities to benefit from the predictability of the story.

In the example above, fingerspelling was used as a way to draw the children's attention to the print in the book. This appears to be a natural way to guide children towards print awareness and later, word recognition. It is the one element of signing that has a direct one-to-one correspondence with English print. In our experience, children as young as two-and-a-half or three years old can learn to use and recognize simple fingerspelling words like B-U-S, V-A-N, and I-C-E when used in a meaningful context.

Taking Time

A theme running through this discussion relates to the issue of time. Repeated storybook readings take time. Teachers often feel pressure to move too quickly in order to meet the demands of the curriculum. Yet, children need time to absorb, process and notice elements of books. They need to spend time looking at and reading books as well as to make connections between ASL and English print. Last, teachers need to give the children time to respond to the stories, to ask their questions. Once the children have asked questions, the time spent in answering the questions, expanding on the ideas or clearing up misconceptions could be some of the most valuable moments of the school day.

Future research could provide us with useful information about the benefits of repeated storybook sharing with deaf children. The use of predictable books when delivered in ASL is also an area ripe for research. Many of the predictable books are based on rhymes. Teachers and parents could benefit from knowing how these books can be delivered in a visual language yet maintain the predictability which has been shown to facilitate literacy development (Tompkins & McGee, 1989). We also need to know more about the uses of fingerspelling to enhance literacy development in deaf children.

Writing Development

Although this section focuses on writing development, it is our position that reading and writing develop in tandem. Therefore, any discussion of writing development, especially at the preschool level, will also at times include reading. We can facilitate our children's emerging knowledge of print in terms of writing in several ways. First, we need to provide them with a risk-free environment where they know that their efforts will be accepted and valued. Developing a positive attitude towards their ability to draw and write is the first step towards becoming a reader/writer. We have found that most children between two and five years old enjoy drawing and writing to some degree, especially if they are showered with positive reinforcement for their efforts. When working with very young or reluctant drawers/writers, we have been known to make quite a fuss over the smallest of scribbles. In the words of Lucy Calkins (1986) "we celebrate what the child can do" (p. 36).

Next, our classrooms should be rich with all ways that encourage exploration of print, including books, environmental print and writing materials. Research with young hearing children suggests that children perform better on tests of reading achievement when they have been exposed to an abundance of functional print in their classroom environment (Taylor, Blum & Logsdon, 1986). Even our youngest children notice letters and words on bulletin boards, charts and signs. These are golden opportunities to connect their observations with fingerspelled letters or words, or to connect them with an ASL explanation. Case studies of the literacy learning of both hearing and deaf preschoolers provide evidence that the first letters and words they learn come from meaningful environmental print and in familiar persons' names (Baghban, 1984; Ewoldt & Saulnier, 1992; Lass, 1982; Maxwell, 1984; Rottenberg & Searfoss, 1993). In their study of the free writing of deaf kindergartners, Andrews and Gonzales (1991) found that the children's names as well as those of their classmates became some of the first sight words they learned. Some of the two, three and four year olds in Ms. Erting's class this year can already identify their names in print as well as those of their classmates while others are just beginning to develop this awareness.

Third, daily writing time should be set up as a social experience, where praise, comments and questions about the writing are commonplace. Research reveals that both hearing and deaf children can learn from one another as they interact about reading and writing (Lamme & Childers, 1983; Kamii & Randazzo, 1985; Long & Bulgarella, 1985; Williams, 1993). Facilitative rather than directive interactions used by the teacher in this context have been linked to more mature written products (Hoffman, 1987). Ms. Erting has noticed that when the children and the

teacher sit together during writing time, the interaction and modeling that can occur often facilitates a better quality product than the child would produce if sitting alone. Often the younger or less experienced writers in the class will solicit assistance from or imitate the writing of their more skilled peers (Williams, 1993). We have seen this happen with children as young as two years old. Older preschool children can work together on a project, pooling their knowledge and discussing their writing. The teacher can also take advantage of the social nature of the writing time by making comments on or asking questions about the children's writing in order to facilitate the child's understanding that the marks on the paper have the power to convey meaning (Calkins, 1986). When appropriate, some of this interaction can be added to the child's work in print form. It is within these types of interactive experiences that direct links can be made between the language of communication, ASL, and the language of print, English.

Developing an early sense of authorship is another part of preschool writing development (Williams, 1993). When children view themselves as authors, they are more willing to participate in the writing process and they quickly learn more conventions of written English (Calkins, 1986). We publish our students' writing as soon as possible in order to help develop their growing understanding that their writing is important and that they, too, can participate in writing stories and books. In their earliest form, the children's books may consist of the mounted drawing/writing of each child which has been laminated, clipped together with metal rings and displayed in the class book area. Later, they may be illustrated dictation that was recorded during show-and-tell or language experience activities. These books are quite popular and are the ones which are chosen most often during free reading time because they are directly linked to the children's experiences.

As a follow-up to the story sharing experience involving a big book about a mouse and a mole cleaning their house, Ms. Pfau suggested that her class make their own big book based on the story. The children responded with enthusiasm and the project was launched. It began with a planning discussion. They collaboratively decided who would illustrate which rooms in the house. Each child drew two pages; one showing the dirty room, the other showing the clean room. The last few pages were done as a cooperative learning activity in groups of two. The whole group decided what to draw on the cover. They discussed all of the drawings in terms of adding text; then the children were encouraged to add text to their pictures. One girl included the words 'no, no' in her writing. The others saw what she had done and asked her for help. In an effort to facilitate risk taking, Ms. Pfau encouraged them all to try, emphasizing that this was not a right or wrong situation. All the writing was accepted.

The above example is full of ways that the teacher helped the children make connections between ASL and English print. First, the children began to focus on the print of the book when they added text to their own book. They used the text as a model for their own writing. When the children got stalled in their writing, they were able to consult the teacher as well as each other for explanations and help. Second, their book was shared and kept in the book area of the classroom with other valued books, and was available to them whenever they wanted to read their work. It contributed to their growing sense of authorship and added to their confidence about writing. Finally, the book was of high interest to the students because they were able to discuss it (through ASL) and relate it to their own knowledge and life experiences, reinforcing the concept that books hold meaning for them. The most striking aspect of this project was the enthusiasm with which the children approached the task. They were excited and eager to participate! This positive attitude is vital if our students are to become successful readers and writers of English.

One area for research in the area of writing that is of particular interest to us is related to visual attention. Both writing and signing require visual attention. When a child is writing, it is not possible to make comments on the written product. Hearing children are sometimes able to listen to instruction encouragement while still maintaining attention to the writing. Deaf children obviously cannot. Some young deaf children are very skilled at controlling their visual attention and are able to move between tasks (i.e. writing and watching signing). It is our experience, however, that many are not. There is a need for longitudinal classroom research that documents the development of visual attention for deaf children of all backgrounds so that we can better understand the appropriateness of the demands we are making on the children in this area. We are also interested in documenting the kinds of interactions that occur among the children as well as with the teacher during writing time and how these interactions affect the children's writing.

Conclusion

This discussion has attempted to place what we know about the emerging literacy of hearing and deaf children in terms of both research and practice within an additive bilingual framework. It is a starting place for those of us who desire to more fully understand our role as facilitators in the ASL and English development of our students. We hope this discussion serves as a confirmation for teachers in terms of what they already do in their classrooms as well as a jumping off place for further reflection and classroom research. Our classrooms are rich with information that addresses the question of English literacy development in classrooms where ASL is used. Teacher research as well as collaborative efforts between university researchers and classroom teachers could document what we are already doing as well as identify ways we can improve our practice to reach our goal of competency in both ASL and English for our students.

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